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History and Theology

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Married Priests?

"THE PLACING into question of the celibacy of the Latin clergy," a French abbé recently wrote, "is a matter which it is easier not to broach at all than it is to close again once opened." The abbé is a wise man, one who shows he recognizes that a full maintenance of clerical celibacy is more easily preserved where its value is not subject to public debate. So it has been for centuries in the Church.

Yet history has a way of putting questions to the Church which individual men may not dare to raise, or may not even see. Clerical celibacy is one of them. A growing shortage of priests in many parts of the world, the existence of an undoubtedly sizable number of laymen who would like to serve the Church as priests but feel they have no vocation to the celibate life, and the urgent need that the Church create new forms of witness to old truths—all of these things contemporary history has placed before the Church. They cannot be ignored. Thus while it is pertinent to note that the very opening of certain questions carries with it the danger of undermining a glorious tradition, if the questions exist they don't vanish because no one mentions them.

As often happens in the Church, however, the first stirrings of a discussion come about by the curious route of a sudden spate of defenses of an old position—even before that position has been seriously questioned. So it was that at the second session of the Council a small number of the Fathers vigorously rejected the idea of a married diaconate on the grounds that it would pave the way for a weakening of the Church's position on a celibate clergy. So it is also in a number of articles which have appeared recently in European Catholic journals attempting to clarify the Church's teaching and dampen any belief that the Church is preparing to change its law. *Informations Catholiques* (December, 1963) and *Herder Correspondence* (May, 1964) have both published lengthy articles summarizing what little European discussion there has been. Each conveys, in a decisive way, the impression that no changes are contemplated and that there does not even exist any significant minority pressure for change.

IN RESPONSE to a dramatically titled article in *Paris-Match* ("The Church is Moving toward a Married Clergy"), which dwelt heavily on the purported existence of a large number of unfrocked priests, an official spokesman for the French hierarchy said that: "Among the hundreds of interventions in the Council not one looked toward the possibility of a modification of the law of clerical celibacy in force in the Latin Church."

Equally worthy of note, the distinguished philosopher Etienne Gilson reported that Pope John had said to him at an audience: "Would you like to know what distresses me most? I do not mean as a man but as Pope. The thought of those young priests who bear so bravely the burden of ecclesiastical celibacy causes me constant suffering. [With a sort of violence, almost an outcry]: For some of them it is a martyrdom. Yes, a kind of martyrdom. It often seems to me as if I was hearing a kind of plea—oh, I do not mean right here but from a great distance—as if voices were demanding that the Church free them from this burden.

"Can I do it? . . . It is not impossible in itself. Ecclesiastical celibacy is not a dogma. The Scriptures do not impose it. It is even easy to effect the change. I take up a pen, I sign a decree, and, the next day, priests who wish to may get married. But I cannot. Celibacy is a sacrifice which the Church has imposed freely, generously, heroically. I recently said to the Cardinals: 'Can we face the prospect the Church can no longer be called one, holy and chaste?' We cannot. No, we cannot do that." (*Informations Catholiques,* Dec. 1, 1963)

One would have to be made of stone not to be moved by the Pope's words. Yet is it impossible that another Pope would see things differently? Is it im-

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possible that another Pope would come to believe that the existence of married clergy would in no way pose a threat to the "chaste" Church? (For that matter, in what way is marriage incompatible with chastity?) We do not think these things are impossible. But to make them possible it will be necessary for the Church to reflect anew on the meaning and purpose of clerical celibacy. Most importantly, it will be necessary for the Church to ask itself whether it could encompass, among the over-all body of clergy, a significant number of married priests.

For the central question, we believe, is not whether celibacy *per se* is a positive good, or whether the Church should relax its position for the pragmatic purpose of countering the decline in vocations. Instead it is this: Would a body of married priests be able to render to the Church and its people some significant services? Would such a body assist the Church in making its witness more efficacious in the world? We think the answer is yes to both questions. More than that, we see no necessary reason why, should there exist a certain portion of married priests, this would in any way subvert the high place which the Church has always accorded celibacy. It would simply be to emphasize what has always been known: that suitability for the clerical state and a vocation of celibacy are not, in principle, the same thing. They have been linked only by Church law, and not by divine or natural law.

The critical problem here is to determine the proper motivation for a breaking of this essentially accidental link. Though many over the centuries have argued that the ideal of celibacy is itself a harmful one, there is as yet little evidence to support such a charge. Too many men have lived holy, productive lives in the celibate state to make any such argument very persuasive. That some priests have been unable to live up to their vow, or find it a "martyrdom" (in Pope John's words) does not invalidate the value of celibacy. Many find it difficult to live up to their marriage vows, but this hardly suggests they should be made provisional.

Understood in its best sense, celibacy is a sign of a total dedication to God and a foreshadowing of man's ultimate destiny in eternal life where there will be neither male nor female. In addition, celibacy is a valuable expression of a life dedicated exclusively to God; not an ordinary life, which could have such a dedication, but rather an extraordinary one, the result of a special call from God to give one's total mind and heart to direct service of the Church. Only a mistaken view of celibacy (though often a common one) would see it as a rejection of sexual relations because of something supposedly debasing about such relations.

The crux of the matter does not, then, lie in the psychological, social or theological viability of celibacy. Nor does it lie, we think, in the growing shortage of vocations. For if one (perhaps over-optimistically) assumes that the lay movement in the Church will develop its full potential, then many of the functions now performed by the clergy can be taken over by trained laymen. Indeed, in one way the Church can be thankful that purely practical considerations have helped force the Church to explore more deeply the theology of the layman. Moreover, if some progress can be made in reviving the diaconate, that too will relieve some of the pressure on the Church brought about by a shortage of priests.

Instead, we believe the key to the matter is this: First, that there are many married laymen who would make excellent priests, but who do not feel called to celibacy. Since Christ did not demand celibacy of His apostles, it ought to be possible for the Church to accept among its clergy married men. Since it has already done this recently in a few cases of former Protestant ministers (especially in Germany) it has in principle already recognized the value of making the most of a man's talents and dedication. Surely there are many other married laymen in the Church equally suited to the priesthood.

Secondly, the modern world presents the Church with many situations in which some married priests would be of immense value. It is, for instance, widely granted that the present parish structure, with its often massive, impersonal central church is far from ideal. Would it not contribute greatly to the creation of smaller, more vital Christian centers of community if, in some areas, there were married priests living in more intimate contact with their people? Priests who lived, not in distant rectories, but in homes like those of the people they serve; and in homes, moreover, where the sacraments would be available more easily? Would this not particularly be true behind the Iron Curtain, or in urban slums?

We do not pretend to know just how the Church could best legislate to bring these possibilities into existence. But the Eastern Orthodox and the Protestant churches offer a wealth of experience upon which the Church could draw for guidelines. The general aim, we suggest, would be to find a practical way of distinguishing between those who would choose a life of celibacy in the priesthood and those who would choose to serve in the married state. Perhaps a special category of duties could be established for the latter: duties least incompatible with the demands of married life.

The practical problems are not insoluble. The only real barrier is the Church's long-standing tradition. It is a good tradition. But it is not the only tradition which the Church has ever had. It need not be the only tradition today.

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U-2's Over Cuba

THE SUPPLANTING of Russian missile crews by hundreds of Cubans trained for months in the Soviet Union is understandably causing some nervousness in Washington. It has to be recognized that there is no certainty that the U.S.S.R. can control Cuba's conduct, while East Europeans who encountered Cuban missile men in training found many of them to be individualistically "reckless." And in the background are the threatening tones of Khrushchev's May Day speech about the possibly "disastrous consequences" of continued American violations of Cuban air space.

Policy planners who would tend to minimize the danger call attention to other factors in the situation. They contrast Castro's with Khrushchev's May Day addresses and stress the fact that Fidel sounds more conciliatory now than he did a few week ago. Not only does he say that Cuba will have to stand alone, implying less direct support from the Soviet Union, but he stresses his "patience" and recourse to "legal" means of protest.

Moreover, there is some reason to believe that, with their missile crews, the Russians are withdrawing their most modern anti-aircraft rockets. Not only will the older ones that remain be less able to shoot down U-2 planes, but additional time will be required to retrain Cuban missile crews prepared in Russia to handle different and more proficient weapons.

All told, this hardly appears to provide a very comfortable margin of safety. For eighteen months Soviet missile crews had the ability to bring down the American U-2's and they obeyed Khrushchev's orders not to fire. Can the United States be as certain of the Cubans? Castro says that if legal means prove unsuccessful he will seek to repel our "armed aggression."

Whether or not Russia promised on-the-ground inspection of Cuban missile sites in October 1962 is hardly of much relevance now. Cuba itself, which is a sovereign State, made no such promise. In any case it is doubtless illegal for America to violate Cuban air space—so that Castro could have a case to bring up before the U.N.

On the other hand, is it not of paramount importance to prevent another build-up of offensive missiles close to American shores? As this is the object of U-2 surveillance, it is unconvincing to call these flights "acts of aggression." Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union are visibly improving but it is doubtful that they have reached the point at which this nation can neglect taking due precautions. We must be prepared to defend the reasonableness of our Cuban stance before the United Nations and, in the meantime, have in readiness for any stray shot ripostes that will not bring about a new armed conflict.

Losing A Good Crisis

IF ZANZIBAR is "the Cuba of Africa," we suppose that Cuba must be "the Zanzibar of America." The similarities are not confined to the threat of Communism. We now know, for instance, something about the way early press reports about Castro's Cuba helped to fan fears, deform public opinion and narrow the options open to diplomats. And the startling announcement of merger between Tanganyika and "the Cuba of Africa" leads us to wonder just what the role of the press has been in precipitately assigning Zanzibar to the Communist camp. The dangers and tensions, it appears, have been real, but it is not clear at the moment how many of them have originated with the press.

Time magazine, speaking in the past tense of Zanzibar's "slide into the Communist camp," said in its April 17 issue that "once-torpid Zanzibar has become an island of fear. Bands of tough government cops, armed with Russian-supplied burp guns, prowl the land in search of 'enemies of state.'" A Tanganyikan journalist, Sammy Mdee (who incidentally was not treated particularly well by the regime), had a different version: "Certainly no government before has enjoyed such mass support on the island. . . . Life in Zanzibar is back to normal. The days of January when the gun was the master are gone, though not forgotten . . . there is certainly nothing to warrant the [ominous] reports we have been hearing on the mainland. . . ."

Also in its April 17 issue, *Time* informed us that the governing Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar "has been laying the foundation for a Communist dictatorship." In fact, on April 17, the Council was laying the foundation for a political merger with democratic Tanganyika, which it signed just four days later.

NEWS & VIEWS

A Pious Disaster

A CLUBWOMAN complained recently that the failure of the New York Archdiocese to hire women from her group as guides at the Vatican World's Fair Pavilion was a clear violation of "the principle of lay participation." But the lady apparently hasn't

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been exposed to James Baldwin's observation that no one wants to be integrated into a burning building. The Vatican Pavilion, alas, has the Pieta, the *Time-Life* slides of the Sistine Chapel, Cardinal Spellman's coin collection, a model of Peter's tomb, Cardinal Spellman's stamp collection, several old pillars, and a poverty of spirit and imagination not usually encountered outside D.A.R. conventions. The visitor is awash in flickering slides, banners, posters, photos, medieval knickknacks and fatuous slogans—an ecclesiastical Automat to tempt the taste of any tourist. But any conception of what the Church is all about is left to be smuggled in by private enterprise.

Fears for the Pavilion had been building for some time. There was the attempt to dress all the Pinkerton armed detectives in the uniform of Swiss guards (Pinkerton said yes, Rome said no); the decision to name it the Vatican Pavilion instead of the Catholic Pavilion; and, of course, the horror of building the exhibition around the Pieta, which arouses the same hopes for a progressive approach as the naming of an expert on fourteenth-century mysticism to fill a Catholic chair at a twentieth-century secular university.

All these fears have been spectacularly fulfilled. The Vatican Council, which might have been given as much attention as Michelangelo, is relegated to one slide box of color photos (no commentary) and a spinning polar projection of the world with pegs to show how many council fathers came from each nation.

In the center of the Pavilion is an outsized poster with the words "This is my commandment—that you should love one another as I have loved you." Nestled among the huge letters are little messages, including such sentiments of the universal Church as "Catholic schools make a $22 billion contribution to the American economy," and "Catholic schools serve a public purpose and deserve public support to the extent that they perform that public service."

Nearby is a long wall of small pictures and quotations, all offered without comment: a photo of Maritain, $e=mc^2$, Karl Marx (or is it Booker T. Washington?), the atomic bomb, "Time is the relation of being to non-being" (Dostoevsky), and "Peace is a means to happiness, and the pursuit of happiness requires both liberty and justice" (Mortimer Adler, Syntopicon prose of).

Another wall, straight out of Buck Rogers, is devoted to slide boxes apparently intended to demonstrate the life of the Church. The following sequence explains the Eucharist: a massive close-up of a grape; a loaf of Jewish rye; a basket of rolls; a wine glass *and* a basket of rolls; wine being poured into the wine glass against the background of a suburban window curtain. So much for the Eucharist.

Part of the trouble seems to stem from a club-footed committee approach. The two quotes from *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, which flank the model of Peter's tomb, have been edited to include something for everybody, even those who derive the Church's social thought from *National Review*. One passage contains a line, out of context, which implies the alleged sacredness of private property rights; the other stresses the danger of placing on a community level what can best be done by individuals—the only balm for Jim Fisk individualists in all of *Mater et Magistra*.

The Pieta itself is hermetically sealed behind bullet-proof glass, guarded night and day, bathed in buttery light and accompanied by Gregorian chant. The only disadvantage is that you can hardly see it. Visitors are spun past it on conveyor belts, the nearest of which is 16 feet away. And although it is an awesome thing to look upon the face of the Lord, in this case the danger is minimal for any viewers less than eight feet tall. After two trips through, Arthur Godfrey walked out in high dudgeon, and the next day shared with his radio listeners some observations on the amount of wisdom that went into the Pieta's setting.

But the Pieta is not the worst of it. The missed opportunities, the free-floating showmanship, the great jumble of art unencumbered by any idea about the Church are all fused in the creation of a $3-million disaster area.

JOHN LEO

WASHINGTON REPORT

The Voice of the Churches

"IN FORMER years, the role of religious groups was that of passive spectators, bleating occasional platitudes about brotherhood. Today, religious leaders are in the front lines of the battle, unafraid of the smoke and din of controversy and determined to press forward until the filibuster is broken and a civil rights bill, unweakened by amendments, is enacted."

These were the hard-hitting words of Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, on the eve of the Interreligious Convo-

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cation on Civil Rights here on April 28. One suspects that Rabbi Eisendrath was too modest in describing the role of organized religious groups in previous struggles for racial justice, but he accurately caught the new mood of militancy that now prevails in all three faiths about passage of the civil rights bill. The American Negro clearly has an unquestionable moral claim to be able to exercise his political and legal rights in every state, to have decent housing and a chance at a job worthy of his talents, to receive dignified treatment in stores, motels, and other places of public accommodation, and to go to first-class schools. For any person who takes his religion seriously, there can be no doubt about recognizing the justice of this claim. If ever there was a public issue on which all churches can speak clearly and with one voice, civil rights is that issue.

The Convocation demonstrated that churches are speaking out and in one voice. The meeting which took place at the Georgetown University gymnasium was an exciting and inspiring event. Priests, ministers, rabbis, and laymen came by chartered bus, private car, plane and train from the major cities in the East and from as far west as Des Moines, Iowa. Since the gymnasium holds only 3800 persons, an overflow crowd had been anticipated, but the attendance of 6500 well exceeded optimistic expectations. The overflow heard the speeches through loudspeakers in a neighboring hall. The crowd was about 80 percent white.

The Most Rev. Patrick A. O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington, who in a quiet, understated way has done a good deal in recent years toward solving some of this city's vexing racial problems, was chairman of the meeting and delivered the invocation. He prayed:

"Lord Almighty, Creator and ruler of the universe, . . . There is in every man a priceless dignity which is Your heritage. From this dignity flow the rights of man, and the duty in justice that all must respect and honor these rights. You have given man an intellect, and he has the right to cultivate his mind by proper education. You have made man for society, and it offends You when men discriminate against their brethren, Your children, Your command was that men should toil in the sweat of their brows, and it is not Your Will that some should be denied work or hindered in work because of race.

"At this moment, the Senate of the United States is considering legislation to implement these rights of man. Enlighten the minds of these, our elected representatives, so that truth may prevail over error and prejudice. Strengthen their wills, so that they may vote what is right and just, disregarding unworthy pressures. May they listen to counsels of hope, and not of despair. May they side with the forces of love, and ignore those who are motivated by hate and distrust.

"Guide also the people of this nation to be responsive to Your Will. May they face the moral crisis of these days with high principle, seeking to heal, not to wound; to unite, not to divide; to build, not to destroy."

As a correspondent covering public functions, I have listened to many invocations. It was a pleasure to hear one whose every word was exactly appropriate and worthy of the occasion.

The speakers included Bishop B. Julian Smith, who is bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and vice chairman of the National Council of Churches' Commission on Religion and Race. Speaking as a Negro and a Protestant, he declared that organized religion "has been insensitive, indifferent and hostile to the aspirations and hopes of Negro people.

"It has cut them off from the main streams of culture, even to the extent of closing the doors of the holy sanctuary to sons of God whose skin is black. It has sanctioned and supported racial segregation and discrimination not only in the community but in its own life and ministry."

Noting that most Negro leaders had advised against "stall-ins" at the World's Fair, he suggested that Southern politicians should not conduct a "stall-in" in the Senate against the civil rights bill.

The other speakers were the Most Rev. Lawrence J. Shehan, Archbishop of Baltimore; the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church; and Rabbi Uri Miller, president of the Synagogue Council of America. Dr. Blake was the oratorical star of the evening. His eloquence evoked repeated applause. Rabbi Miller devoted himself to taking apart the vicious half-truth: "You can't legislate morals. Change men's hearts and then you can change their behavior."

This implies that law and education are mutually exclusive. They are, on the contrary, as Rabbi Miller declared, "complementary and dependent upon each other." Judaism, he observed, has always stressed the central place of law in moral behavior. "Law is the one way civilized communities have found to make effective the moral will of the community involved."

The Washington Convocation was planned as the model for similar meetings in other cities.

Meanwhile, a group of young seminarians are maintaining a silent vigil for civil rights twenty-four hours a day in the park opposite the Lincoln Memorial. In groups of three or four, they stand a three-hour watch in front of a large, home-made sign which reads: "Theological Students Civil Rights Vigil. Protestant—Catholic—Jewish. Civil Rights is basically a moral issue. We are here to speak to the conscience of every man. We are all brothers before God."

The vigil began on Sunday, April 19. The idea for it originated several weeks earlier at Union Theological Seminary and quickly spread to students at Jewish and Catholic seminaries. It will continue unbroken until the Senate passes the bill. The students have already filled their hour-by-hour schedule through June. It takes more

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than 200 students a week to man the vigil, but more than 100 seminaries have agreed through their student organizations to participate.

The Catholics have the easiest role because they can draw on the 1500 students who attend the 35 seminaries centered at Catholic University. Most of the Protestant and Jewish students have to come from out of town. The latter have rented a car and organized a regular shuttle service to and from New York. Every afternoon at 3:30 the car leaves Broadway and 122nd Street with two Protestant and two Jewish students. Every night at 9:30 four of the previous day's watchers use the same car to make the trip back to New York. The pastor of Holy Comforter (Catholic) Church has made the basement of his rectory available to these out-of-town students. Eight can sleep there. Women's organizations take turns each day providing food for the seminarians. When not on vigil, they join in the three-cornered inter-faith dialogue that is always underway in the rectory basement. "It is like a little Ecumenical Council," one of the students remarked.

The Catholic students arrange their assignments in the vigil through the Catholic Students Missionary Crusade with each seminary responsible for providing students on a different day. On the day I interviewed the students, it was the turn of the Paulist seminary.

"There are 71 of us at St. Paul's, including three Cuban exile boys," explained Thomas Cahill, 24, a fifth-year student.

"The enthusiasm to take part in the vigil was so intense that instead of sending one man every three hours, we decided to send two men every hour. That way more could participate," he said.

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

Thomas D. Langan

The Polish Paradox

Forced to be moderately liberal, Polish Marxists find themselves somewhat proud of Poland's relative openness

AS THE Vienna-Warsaw "Viscount" breaks out of the clouds over the Carpathian mountains, the first signs of the political paradox in Poland are actually visible. The undulating fields three miles below form a tapestry of long, slender plots, each with a little house, in striking contrast to the great uneven squares one sees when flying over Ohio or Illinois. The farmers cling desperately to these remnants, three to five acre farms, refusing even the most sensible schemes of co-operative organization of the kind common in Western countries, preferring a horse—and a horse-sized plot—to a tractor. Tractors mean tractor stations, dependence on the regime for gasoline, spare parts and fertilizer, as tractors do not produce manure, only foul gases.

Naturally, the Polish farmer would like to earn more. He would like to have a tractor, offered for a very few *szlotis*, but he is not ready to pay the hidden price, which he fears would ultimately be the right to practice his Catholic religion. If the regime finds itself obliged to tolerate an agriculture hopelessly archaic by either Soviet or Western standards, if indeed it has to reconcile itself to the idea that Poland is much farther from collectivization or from co-operatives than in 1956, and the only Soviet country that still finds the majority (more than seventy-five percent) of its farms in private hands, it is because the October revolution of 1956 made it clear that there was no other choice.

THERE is nothing that pricks the conscience of a reigning Communist party like a clear demonstration of opposition from the proletariat and the little farmers—the very classes whose aspirations the party is supposed to crystallize. Budapest did not leave the Marxists with good consciences. When the workers in Poznan revolted only months before the Hungarian revolution and the Polish farmers began eating what they produced instead of sending it to the city, the Stalinist regime was faced with this alternative: either another *defeat* like the one they were to suffer in Budapest (for Budapest was a defeat, much as a race-riot is a defeat for democracy), or a radical change of course, inaugurating an era of co-existence with its own people's traditional conscience, especially with their Catholicism.

At the beginning of the "de-freeze" in 1957, Gomulka announced in a great policy speech that membership in State Co-operative Farms would henceforth be purely voluntary. There occurs in Polish official farm statistics for the next two months an embarrassing blank; but when the count takes up again, with the exception of the small

THOMAS D. LANGAN, an associate professor of philosophy at Indiana University, recently visited Poland as a guest of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

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number of former large land-holdings, all the co-operatives had dissolved themselves overnight. Other notable "co-existence" measures after 1957: re-installation of the clergy to teach religion in the public schools; freedom for the Catholic university in Lublin; a Catholic professor named to the philosophy chair in Krakow; considerable freedom to discuss and criticize in the intellectual journals; the admission of Western newspapers and books in limited quantities; more freedom for Polish non-Communist intellectuals to travel to the West.

That policy of "co-existence" is now six years old. I was glad to accept an invitation of the Polish Academy of Sciences to reciprocate the visit to Indiana University of one of its influential members because I wanted to see how "co-existence" is faring now. I was free to go where I wanted, for as long as I wanted, and to speak with anyone. There is one effect of the "de-freeze" that is persisting; in contrast to the East Germans and Russians, the Poles on both sides feel free to air their opinions, even in a cafe, with no more *gêne* than one feels in Paris or Chicago. For a while, they felt fairly free to do so in print as well. However, there is a present sign that the temperature is dropping again. The last two fairly liberal intellectual journals were closed down last May. Equally serious, religion has been barred from public schools again, on the pretext that the teaching of religion was putting the children of the minority, i.e., the sons and daughters of Party members, in embarrassing situations. A top Party official complained that his daughter was made to feel distinctly unwanted in the school because she shunned the religion instruction!

Now the screws are being turned on religious instruction even outside the schools. All locales used for such teaching require State sanitary inspections, and, of course, it is remarkable how the Church always manages to find intolerable pigsties in which to hold catechism classes. The Catholic University, which flourished after 1957, receiving the pick of the brightest students in Poland, has recently been told it must limit drastically its number of students.

Most recently the Party began taking on the Church on the most delicate of issues: birth control. Having failed to spur an economic development as vigorous as the population growth, the Party considers this is the only other way to extricate Poland from the absorption of an increased gross national product by an even more increased population. The problem is difficult: one out of every three Poles is still of school age, and hence a non-producer.

HOW DO the non-Communist intellectuals view the situation as it now stands? In a word, with a kind of disarming calm and confidence. This is partly due to the fact that only older people can remember a time when Poland had it so good. The Nazis reigned five years, during which hell they reduced the Polish population from 33 to 27 million, systematically dynamited all the Polish national monuments, convoked the faculty of the famous Jagalone University in Krakow "to reorganize" its programs, loaded the assembled professors—Poland's best minds—into trucks and took them out in the country to machine gun them, as another step in their program of eliminating "unhealthy" Polish culture from the earth. Then came seven years of Stalinist terror, when an intellectual dared not even answer a letter received from the West. After 1957, the intellectual climate not only seemed by comparison liberal, but because farm production, with a shot of "free enterprise," began improving for a while, people in the towns could even find fruits and vegetables to eat.

But undoubtedly the soundest ground for the Catholics' confidence is the actual state of the religion itself. In this regard, one cannot help being impressed by the full churches and the enthusiasm of Catholic intellectuals. On a Wednesday and Thursday evening I visited six churches in Krakow; there were evening Masses in all of them, filled to the doors with faithful of all ages and both sexes. Is this duplicated anywhere else in the world? And the intellectuals' enthusiasm is quite compelling. They are sure of themselves, proud of their students, and even confident that they can make a dent on the younger Marxists intellectually. (After learning that the chair of philosophy in Krakow is occupied by the world-renowned phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden, and after meeting many of the young assistants and researchers and finding them all Catholics, I finally asked, in astonishment, "Aren't there *any* Marxists here at all?" I was answered, "Oh, a couple of young ones. But we're working on them." My respondent's grin indicated that the situation is, of course, not that rosy. In Warsaw, it should be noted, everything is solidly in Marxist hands.) But what is still more impressive is that the best Marxist minds seem to recognize that co-existence with Catholicism will have to last a long time, and what is more remarkable, they are even beginning to wonder if maybe that state of affairs does not have its advantages.

It is not so much the political or just the pietistic vitality of the Church as its intellectual vigor which seems to account for this. In a period of just a few days, the leading ideologist of the Communist party in a state neighboring on Poland, and two renowned Polish Marxist

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thinkers told me, without solicitation, that they were amazed by the scope of Pope John's social vision and that they had been reading, with sympathetic astonishment, the theology of the late French Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In his works they saw evidence "that Catholic thought had at last taken account of history," which for a Marxist is about like a Catholic's concluding that the Marxists had at last taken account of the reality of supernatural grace.

I probed all my interlocutors for their personal estimates of what this Catholicism, with which Communism will have to co-exist, is *really* all about. The closer the individual to real power, the tougher and narrower he tended to be. But even then, at worst, the answer was something like this: "A political organization with two thousand years' experience at surviving, cutting across social class (very important!), with deep roots still in the proletariat." The man who said this, who is in a position to carry out a threat, once remarked to me in another context, "We shall never make the classical mistake: we are not going to create any martyrs." Two of the intellectuals admitted that they thought there was much more to the "problem" of Catholicism than just the question of an old organization trying to preserve its existence after it had outworn its historical usefulness. What it was, they were not sure.

Marxists are, in their own special way, *realists*. Capitalism is obviously not dead *yet*, for the simple reason that the "vested interests" are simply refusing to lie down and die. So the Reds are quite prepared to make fairly long-range plans to co-exist with bourgeois capitalism for a while. But still, they feel, the signs of the "coming collapse" are there: automation will aggravate the unemployment problem, agricultural surpluses will bleed the U.S. white, and then the have-not countries, some of which are getting poorer rather than richer, are *bound* to explode. But I could find no sign that the Polish Marxists thought Catholicism was either in theory or in fact as caught up in the structural contradictions which are supposedly going to blow capitalism apart—or at least (here comes the realism again, they have been obliged by Western strength to reappraise) to "evolve toward a socialist position." I did, however, catch suggestions that they took both the ideological advances of Teilhard and the political advances of Pope John as signs that the Church had recognized that *it* must accommodate itself to the hard facts of the "coming victory of socialism." But such an estimate is not necessarily negative in Marxist eyes; the Church's supposed "realism" would rather be taken as a sign of vitality.

But how can atheists be expected to have any respect for the Church? The Polish Marxists are clearly no less "atheistic" for all that, and their opposition to the Church no weaker, but there are different ways of being atheist, distinct grades of atheist *dogmatism*. And when it comes to co-existing with people whose deepest convictions collide with your own, it makes an essential difference whether one side considers the other a benighted collection of unfortunate backwashes of history, maintaining their callous errors by means of monolithic *bad faith* grounded in the narrowest "vested-interests"; or whether they feel that while the opposition's essential position is erroneous, the reasons why this error persists are terribly complex, the sincerity of its perpetrator is not in question, nor the error itself absolute, nor both positions in all matters irreconcilable.

Events these last fifteen years have conspired to force some of the woodenness out of the position of Polish Communists. The serene confidence of the Catholics and their evident *good* faith is a central but not the only factor. This good faith is well illustrated by the statement of a leading Catholic intellectual: "Socialism has its positive sides. Before the war I was a member of an old and rich family. Today my means are very modest, but sufficient. It is to me, as a Christian, consoling to know that there is no more misery in Poland. We are all poor together, but no one is starving, no one is without a roof."

THE fact that all are poor together is to be taken quite literally. I received the impression, although I am not sure of this at all, that the great inequality in distribution of the goods of the society which characterizes Soviet Russia today is not nearly so exaggerated in Poland. On the other hand, the general poverty, eighteen years after war's end, *should* be another factor causing the Marxists to be a little less confident in the absolute truth of their approach to "social justice." Dwelling space is legally limited to 30 square feet per person, and many would be happy to have that much. Food is not rationed, but butcher shops often have nothing in them but Folk's Sausage. Fruits and vegetables are free market, so they at least exist, expensive, and in narrow choice. Wines, caviar, and other delicacies imported from Comecon lands are expensive, but not untouchable. Other consumer goods are in scarce supply, and the general quality is poor. With the exception of a few foreign cars, purchased by Poles while working in foreign countries, only official cars are on the roads—Poland's own production the "Warszawa," an imitation of a 1947 Chevy.

What is most depressing to the tourist is the fact that everything (especially the "Warszawas") is falling apart. No provision ever seems to be made in the plan for maintenance. A new hotel for foreigners is built in Warsaw. After five years, it is deteriorating so badly that they just build another one and turn the old one over to Polish tourists. Warsaw is already working on its third hotel, the "Europaiski." Why? Is it because when everything has to be decided rationally and globally from the top, in dividing the predictable resources, the leaders are loath to hold back large quantities of basic materials from the construction of fundamental industries in order to assure the proper upkeep of what exists already or just to pro-

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vide some of the little amenities, like variety of choice and ice in drinks when it is 95° in the shade? I saw street car rails being replaced in Krakow without being welded. It is obviously much cheaper *now* to bolt them together, but in five years, the street will need to be torn up again, and the rails replaced. What will happen in fact, however, is that the trolleys will just have to bump along over low rail-joints and like it.

The examples of the impossible cumbersomeness, the initiative-damping and the inhumanity of monolithic planning could be multiplied without end. It was decided that hams exported to the U.S. would sell better in smaller cans, but it took the bureaucracy six years to produce the first small tins (the cans were ready but somebody forgot to work labels into the plan). This does not seem to strike the leaders as raising any problem of *principle*. A member of the Central Committee remarked to the American ambassador, "Poles are notoriously poor planners. Everything will be fine when we can do our planning with electronic computers."

But still, the relative material failure of the Soviet bloc to date is not only consolation to the opposition: it puts a brake on dangerous over-confidence, and requires the Communists to keep revising their timetables. The Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. has stuck its neck way out by projecting the beginning of "the transition to Communism" for 1980. If we want "co-existence" to continue on a quite peaceful basis long beyond that date, we had better continue our policy of not helping them achieve this goal. The Poles are convinced that without thoroughgoing disarmament, the Eastern bloc will fail to finance the necessary expansion, and the fostering of revolutionary movements in underdeveloped countries will continue to be so dangerous that the advance of the Communist cause will be retarded. In other words, they will blame *us* for: (a) their own failure to expand rapidly enough; (b) the containment of Communism; and (c) the "temporary" Western prosperity "based on the arms race."

They would, or so it seems, gladly have us disarm at once, completely. Mere atomic disarmament would leave both most of the economic and the costly war-danger problem facing them. Even another Korea-type war would brake expansion in a society using 110 percent of its productive capacity.

The economic situation offers too many occasions for excuses and the Communist feeling that Moscow was not built in a day keeps this from being one of the truly central factors causing the new flexibility. That is why I believe it is a mistake for us to over-emphasize the fact of our great strength in this area—just as it would obviously be a mistake to do anything to lessen it. Moreover, who really knows what a rapid and complete disarmament would bring? In any event, as long as it does not occur, the Communists can use the arms race as an excuse for every problem in this area.

IF ECONOMIC problems are not an immense factor in lessening Communist dogmatism, the Chinese development assuredly is. When confronted squarely with the question, a leading Party leader, after a moment of apparent hesitation, replied, "Frankly, I am frightened to death of them. This was a development Marx could not have foreseen. He was convinced that socialism would come as a last stage of development in the most developed occidental countries. Then, only after the socialist way had been secured in those countries, they could school the developing countries. But now what do we have? China suddenly threatening us with Orwellian communism!"

The pathos of these words requires that we not underestimate the accomplishment, seen from our viewpoint, which they represent. The Chinese (aided by Stalin as well) have revealed to the Marxists the full measure of inauthenticity latent in a wooden, fanatic application of one interpretation of the doctrine. They have made it clear, too, that Communism has been concerned too narrowly with only some, although perhaps very fundamental, needs of man. Poland's most influential Marxist philosopher, Adam Schaff, has written extensively criticizing Marxists for forgetting the legitimate humanist aspirations of the individual. With their oriental unconcern for the individual, the Chinese have made the Western Marxists aware that class distinctions once removed, there remain the other historical factors, including many elements of spiritual tradition, won at the cost of long effort, and which the Marxists no more want to sacrifice to the proletarian revolution than we do.

Do they realize how purely Christian in origin are many (though not all) of these traditional accomplishments of Western culture? They are obviously not anxious to underscore this fact. But the Russians, at the time of the Nazi threat, officially reminded their people that the Russian Orthodox Church was often a factor for good, that the Church existed even before feudal times, and hence not every aspect of it has necessarily been corrupted through its later retrogressive alliance with the entrenched bourgeoisie.

In any event, there are little human signs that many

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Communists recognize that the best, the sincerest Christians unselfishly desire the "humanization" of man as much as they do. And even as far as capitalist countries are concerned, it is quasi-official doctrine that the majority of the people—certainly most of the workers and little farmers—are in solidarity with the workers of the world everywhere, and indeed "hold back their bourgeois leaders from plunging the world into destructive war." At last report, a stalemate has resulted, and nothing is as yet built.

Does this new realization on their part that as a Western, developed country they may have more in common with us than they once realized mean that tensions will now relax? The first lesson to be drawn from the experience of "co-existence" in Poland is that any relaxation in Communist pressure will be tactical and can prove only temporary. Despite whatever new respect the Catholics in Poland have acquired for themselves, the struggle is now again intensifying, not relaxing. In the new steel city of Nova Huta, near Krakow, 100,000 people are without a single church. A plot was set aside originally for one, and a large wooden cross marked the spot. When workers came a few weeks ago to remove the cross in order to start construction of a recreation hall instead, the wives in the neighborhood called their husbands from the mills, and a riot almost ensued.

The Communists are not about to change their essential convictions and strategic goals. But their respect for the opposition has swung them to change their tactics, their timetables, and maybe even their deep-down notion of what "the struggle with capitalism" really is. The suggestion that both sides might learn something from one another is new. But let us have no illusions: that means to them that they can learn unessential techniques from us, while we must learn from them how to progressively change our principles. But that is already an advance over the notion that the "struggle with capitalism" means "liberating" the proletariat through the direct intervention of the Red Army.

If we remain economically and militarily superior for long, will the Communists grow to respect our sincerity and our humanity sufficiently to make possible *peaceful* co-existence in which struggle might eventually be reduced to little more than the competition between differing political philosophies such as one finds between the political parties in a healthy democracy? The Polish paradox proves nothing makes disagreeing groups co-exist like the necessity to do so born of the real strength of both sides. And the Polish Catholics further prove that political power comes not only from guns and money to buy guns, or from a position that permits hampering the other person's power to buy guns, but also from clear conviction and sincerity in living that conviction.

The most dangerous thing in the world today, from our standpoint, are any uncertainties or ambiguities in what we believe and any weaknesses in our putting it into practice. Because their convictions are firm and unambiguous —no one can accuse the Polish worker or the dispossessed intellectual of maintaining a "vested interest"—the Polish Catholics have obliged the Party to grant some degree of freedom. Now many Polish Marxists, perhaps without admitting to themselves that they have been forced to be a bit liberal, nevertheless find that they themselves are rather proud of Poland's place as the only Soviet country with quite that much openness.

The question about a future gain in confidence and respect between Soviet and democratic countries will probably be outflanked by the problem arising from Chinese leadership among exploding underdeveloped countries. If the situation particularly in Asia gets bad enough Russia could find itself in something like Yugoslavia's position, but on a grand scale. How quickly and how thoroughly the European Communist nations may get driven to co-exist really with us will depend not only on how rapidly and how seriously the Chinese situation degenerates, but on how strong we continue to be and how sincere and reliable. That is the most valuable lesson to be learned in Poland today: make yourself respectable—be strong both physically and ideally—and you not only can resist, you may eventually begin to attract.

Miss Addleman Revisited

Mourners come and go, the family stands
In corners of the parlor, shaking hands; I wait
Among the raftered shadows of your vestibules
In line at length respectfully to view
Your straightlaid bones, and leave in my good time.
A child makes croupy coughing in her hands,

And from the stairwell windows to the West I see
Where up on Schoolhouse Hill the maples dry
In winterbud beneath an Easting sky; the halls
Are stacked with Crisco tins for kindergarten clays.
I step the attic stairs through nested hay
Your old man laid ten years ago, and died.

Your graves are elsewhere, here was where you lived.
From Schoolhouse Hill I hear the playground bell
Or merely slate shard ringing from my feet.
Miss Addleman, I mutter at your sheets: I fear
My converse bone distracts and teaches me
My chalky heart is monitored too well

To dare again, Miss Addleman, as in those years
You made me wait the noontime recess out
Upon your creaky office cot for fear
My doctored heart might die of play yards, all
The fierce attentions of the dying child
Pinned down to sleep beneath the chalky shawls.

JOHN ENGELS

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MICHAEL NOVAK

When Is Doctrine Pure?

Theological principles must meet the concrete test of facts and events

THE CHIEF STORY of the second session is the story of the erosion of a school of theology, the theology of the "prophets of doom." It is the story of the growing ascendancy of other theologies. more contemporary and more ancient, over the immobile and abstract theology which since the Reformation has predominated in the Church. The secondary story concerns a procedural struggle. In that struggle, the representatives of the contemporary and ancient theologies, who were in the majority at the Council, tried to make the central organs of the Council, and of the Church, more responsive to their views. The majority struggled against a minority, but the minority held the key parliamentary positions. Partisans of the minority chaired most of the commissions, and held higher representation on the commissions than they did in the Council. They had more than their share of members among the twelve council presidents. The Secretary General of the Council, Archbishop Felici, was one of their leaders. Two of the moderators, on the other hand, Cardinals Suenens and Doepfner, were leaders of the majority; a third, Cardinal Lercaro, was highly thought of by the majority; and the fourth, Cardinal Agagianian, was among the most respected of the minority.

The maneuvering and struggling for parliamentary power makes a more engrossing story than the development of theology; actions arrest attention more easily than ideas. But in the long run, when actions are forgotten, ideas are still being studied, meditated on, and giving rise to new actions. For that reason, although we cannot slight the record of events, let us pause to try to understand the movements of thought which are still at stake in the Council. Here lies the essential meaning of the Council. Unless the theology is grasped, nothing of importance is grasped. It is, in fact, the difference in theology which even the common mind of the peoples has already sensed, under the metaphors of "winds of change," "fresh air," "open doors," and even the word "renewal." The difference in theology—in attitude of mind—is so fundamental that even the outward history of the Council recorded in the public press has been a parable about it. Those who have read the press dispatches and the articles have grasped the parable. Many of them are struggling to analyze it in more precise and clearer terms.

When Pope John, and Pope Paul after him, called for an *aggiornamento* in the Church, by that very fact they shook the justification on which the unrenewed, unreformed institutions within the Church rested. The resistance was vigorous, sometimes direct, sometimes subtle. The resistance to renewal and reform is not very widespread; but it runs very deep, for the theology on which it rests runs deep.

We need a name for this entrenched theology of the last four hundred years. One might call it "Roman theology," but its supporters are found in many cities, in many lands; moreover, by no means all of the theologians of Rome support it. One might call it "curial theology," but many of its adherents do not belong to the Roman Curia. One might call it "the theology of the Holy Office," for it is that most noble of offices which has been chiefly charged with preserving it; but the name would then call too much attention to too small a group, and leave untouched the many more proponents spread throughout the world. One might call it the "theology of the Counter-Reformation," but that title embraces far too much and, besides, awakens old polemics which do not accurately describe what is at stake. Interpreters of the first session were fond of using the terms "liberals" and "conservatives," "progressives" and "traditionalists," "reactionaries" and "innovators"; but these terms, besides borrowing too much from political life, are not faithful to Christian history: all Catholic theologians wish to conserve the Word given to the Church, and to preach it anew to progressing ages. The debate at issue is how best to conceptualize and to formulate the tradition for our time, once having recovered it.

Another proposal for naming the entrenched theology of the last four hundred years is to call it by its leading characteristics: "immobile theology," or "abstract theology," or "triumphal theology." This proposal seems to strike more nearly at the heart of the matter. It emphasizes that the fundamental point at issue is a question of methodology: Is there more than one Catholic theology? If, so, what methods do these theologies use? By what means is "the mind" of the Church discovered? The root issue, then, is not which among alternative *propositions* shall we choose as best representing the faith given to

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the Church by God. The root issue is: by what *method* shall we decide which of two alternative propositions best represents that faith?

DEBATE on the floor of the Council can succeed in covering up this root issue. The debate can seem to concern the meaning of contrasting propositions. It can seem to concern the attitudes, or points of view, or schools of thought, of the contesting Council Fathers. It can seem to concern the limited aims, local problems, or abiding personal interests of the individual disputants. Because the Council Fathers pit themselves against each other on all these various levels, the root question is often obscured. Moreover, Pope John declared in his opening address that the Council was to be a "pastoral" Council. But what is a pastoral theology? How does one decide which of two contrasting propositions is best suited for the needs of men? What are the principles for making a good pastoral decision in questions of theology? . . .

A friend once told me a story which helps shed light, and humor, on the issue. He was talking to an Italian priest who had just spent many months in a certain area of South America, and several more months in North America. The priest exclaimed that he admired the Church in this region of South America much more than the Catholicism he had seen in North America. My friend, aware that the region of South America in question lacked clergy, and even faithful, asked the priest, "But you said that the churches there were empty, that the people were going Communist, and that the country lacked vocations; and here you have seen nothing but full churches, many vocations, thousands going to the sacraments." "Ah, yes," the priest answered, "but there the doctrine is so pure!"

When is doctrine pure? Faced with two propositions, each with the same number of words, each in the same language, each trying to express the same point, by what method does one decide which of the two is more faithful to the Gospels? Sometimes, for example, the key word in the proposition cannot be found in the Scriptures, either because the formulation is not in a scriptural language, or because the precise point did not explicitly arise in biblical history. *Homoousion*, "of one substance with," the key phrase of the Council of Nicaea in 325, was such a word. "Papal infallibility," from the First Vatican Council, in 1870, is another. (Latin, the language of that Council, is not a scriptural language.)

The problem of theological method is a ticklish one, and we will do well to leave it to theologians. . . . But, for our present purposes, we must also have a rough idea of what is involved. In his opening address and in *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII saw to it that the Council was founded on two principles: the principle of historical development and the principle of concrete reality. Both of these principles insist upon attention to concrete history: to the men, movements, and events of history. Both principles insist that the man who uses them must enter the stream of history and work from within it, conscious that his words and his concepts are conditioned by it (the principle of development), and that his theories must meet the test of concrete facts, movements, and events (principle of concrete reality). The first principle is aimed against the idea that words have meaning outside of their historical context, or are unconditioned by their origins. The second is directed against the idea that ideology is "pure" and should be judged only in the light of logic; it insists on judgment of institutions, men, and events as they appear in fact as well as in theory. Both principles deny the man who uses them the right to claim that he or his ideas are uninfluenced by history, or that he need not undertake the work of bringing his ideas and methods to the bar of concrete reality. Words are not enough; abstract definitions are not enough; his views must meet the test of facts, from both the present and the past.

However, many thinkers at the Council seemed to be afraid of these two principles. For these principles seem to deny them the safety of their stand on the ground of unshakable, unchangeable, and unconditioned propositions, and their claim that these propositions are correct, complete, efficacious, and triumphant, *whatever* the historical realities around them. Many at the Council seemed to be afraid of history. They preferred the bright, clear world of their truths. They saw danger in admitting that the formulation of these truths was conditioned by historical events, and that their efficacy (not their truth) was to be judged by their success in the actual world, not by their coherence in a book or a system. Pope John's twin principles, in short, called for a shift in theological method which many found frightening. "*Fratres, caveamus!*" a certain cardinal pleaded with his brother bishops on one occasion at the second session: "Brothers, let us beware!"

THE THEOLOGY which has been entrenched for the last four hundred years, then, might fairly be described as "non-historical" or even "anti-historical." It favors speculation which is not called to the bar of historical fact, past or present; moreover, it often seems to fear principles which would make it face such a bar. It sometimes discourages speculation altogether, and confines itself to making commentaries on a theoretical structure once built up, in the late Middle Ages, in the past. It would be fair to name this theology "anti-historical orthodoxy," because it defends a system of propositions as orthodox, while refusing to commit itself to the work of investigating that system's historical justification, or making it relevant to the historical realities of the present. It would be fair to call it "anti-historical orthodoxy," but a more neutral designation is simply "non-historical." For it defends an orthodoxy suspended, as it were, outside of history, in midair. . . .

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Non-historical orthodoxy is, therefore, a cumbersome way of thinking. It seems to encourage intellectual duality: one has to think twice, once for theory and once for practice. Sometimes facts do not fit theory; what, then, shall one say? When the order of practice contradicts the order of theory, on which level should one speak?

Moreover, non-historical orthodoxy encourages, or rather insists upon, the view that "truth is unchanging." But it does not seem to notice that languages change, that intellectual viewpoints and methods change, that new facts (even about ancient happenings) are discovered, that men's manner of understanding even the same sentences change. What, then, about truth remains unchanging? The answer differs with each "truth" that is in question. "The sun moves around the earth" once seemed to be a fixed truth, as fixed as the earth it described. "Mary was immaculately conceived" once seemed a matter of theological uncertainty. "The donation of Constantine" once seemed a fundamental historical fact. "Christ is consubstantial with the Father" once seemed a verbal innovation. "The bishops share in the universal pastorship with the Pope by divine right" even now seems to some false and to others a matter that is and always has been true. The sentence "Truth is unchanging," in other words, is a fog which tells us nothing of the hard objects, the "truths," it is meant to describe. It is a misleading expression. "Truth" may be unchanging, whatever it is when thus considered in the abstract. But, in the concrete, men's struggle to understand is not static and unchanging. Men's point of view, experience, conceptions, and language change. Men's grasp of "truths" therefore changes, too.

Finally, non-historical orthodoxy likes the world of principles, ideals, theories, platitudes, perfections. So long as a matter is understood juridically—in the purity of its logic and its connection with principles—you may, then, in practice, use casuistry to meet hard facts. A certain unscrupulousness in the concrete may thus be combined with the most delicate sense of principles. Non-historical orthodoxy encourages the moralizer, the preacher, the rhetorician in us. It does not encourage getting down to cases and getting on with concrete proposals. Non-historical orthodoxy encourages lovely images and elevated sentiments; it finds the actual world bewitching, dangerous, and "dirty." It thus combines triumphalism about the glories of the Church with pessimism about the contemporary world. Non-historical orthodoxy, therefore, encourages loyalty to the ideal Church, without worrying about how to make the actual Church efficacious in the present world. It visualizes the Church as an anvil on which the ill-willed world rains its unavailing blows; the Church is always triumphant, without moving. The order of fact, history, concrete reality is the enemy; the Church must try to remain in the pure world—the pure world of irrelevance. Men are to blame, real, historical men, for not lifting their minds to the loftier realm where non-historical orthodoxy lies.

The bewitching feature of non-historical orthodoxy is that it apes the Catholic doctrine of the supernatural and the natural. It aligns the supernatural with the world of logic, juridical clarity, order, perfection. It aligns the natural with the world of history, individuality, difference, change. When it urges men, "Lift up your minds," it means that they should shift their mental focus from the real world they know to the ideal world where all is serenity, triumph, beauty, and holy sentiment. It does not mean that they should reflect that just as they are, in their individuality, in their particular circumstances, in the uncertainties and risks of their personal situation, they are sons of God. It encourages them to retreat from the real world, instead of to be more faithful to it. It encourages them to treat it as a temptation or a defilement or a punishment, rather than as a moment-by-moment conversation with Providence, in which His will and His love are steadily revealed. It encourages a conscience formed around abstractions or general laws, rather than a conscience formed around personal and concrete decisions. As a consequence, it makes the supernatural world appear to be an artificial, abstract, distant world, instead of the world of sun, moon, stars, and wind into which Christ was born, and which He redeemed. It complicates and falsifies man's approach to God, by introducing the confusing, dualistic philosophy of two worlds, one supposedly ideal and the other supposedly ugly, into our reflections on our faith. There is only one world, fallen and redeemed. Each object, event, and person that touches our life is a grace. "Everything," as Bernanos said, "is grace." It is possible to be very simple in one's belief, and very direct, as Pope John XXIII understood.

Perhaps we have said enough to show what is at stake in the Second Vatican Council. Theologies alive to history, formed by history, loving, respecting, and criticizing history, are struggling to find a right to exist within Roman Catholicism. Each of them offers its light for the illumination of a faith greater than they, a faith as great as the Word Himself. One theology, long entrenched in the Church, pretends to exclusive rights over the faith. The men who serve it are convinced that if they are defeated the faith is defeated with them. Men who support the other theologies believe that Catholic faith is greater than the one theology thinks. . . .

The Second Vatican Council is trying to come to grips with the world in which the Church of the twentieth century finds itself. It is trying to insert the Church back into the center of historical life, with respect for the moment of history in which it acts. There are those who are afraid of this venture; and the story of the second session of the Vatican Council is largely a story of the struggle of these well-placed, powerful few against the majority. It is a story all the more dramatic because each side believes that it is right.

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THE SCREEN

Like Who?

WHETHER there is to be a continuation of the current cycle of interracial films will probably depend on how well two new items in the series do. Neither "Black Like Me" nor "The Cool World" is a particularly good or appealing movie; but both were made inexpensively, as films go, and other producers will watch their box-office returns with interest. No matter how social-minded film-makers may be, even their low-budget pictures run into many thousands of dollars and must show some financial return. Movies are a chancy business. Last year Ossie Davis's "Gone Are the Days" did not do well at the box office, while "Lilies of the Field," in which Sidney Poitier's fine performance won an Oscar, was a tremendous hit. Now it remains to be seen whether these two new movies will win paying customers. It is to be hoped that interest will be displayed—not just a doctrinaire regard, but an economic concern too.

It would seem that a better film than the current "Black Like Me" could have been made from John Howard Griffin's book about a Southern white writer who dyes his skin, passes as Negro, and travels through the South to learn what it's like to be a Negro today. What he learns makes neither him nor anyone else satisfied or happy. No doubt reading about this is more convincing and penetrating than seeing it all happen.

As directed by Carl Lerner, who also wrote the screenplay with Gerda Lerner from Griffin's book, "Black Like Me" appears more sensational and surface-skimming than a treatise like this should be. Perhaps it was too difficult to visualize Griffin's points. And perhaps the whole experiment (which Griffin actually experienced) is futile. As one young Negro says late in the picture to John Finley Horton, the well-meaning, intensely sincere main character, "You'll wipe that blackness off and they'll treat you like a man. We're black in a white man's country and we can't get out of that. You don't understand a thing if you don't understand that." So much for the experiment, itself—but what Horton is able to do, however, is to recount the story of his travels through the deep South and to describe the indignities and sufferings dealt out to Negroes.

In a mixture of documentary style and hopped-up melodrama, director Lerner visualizes the humilities and sufferings through which Horton (and no doubt many a Negro) goes—the problem on the bus when the driver won't allow him to use the men's room, the terror brought on by white men who chase him, the situations in eating places and rooming houses. But what angers Horton most is the white man's almost obsessive interest in the Negro's sexual life; again and again when Horton is given a ride on the road by whites, the driver finally gets around to asking about Horton's sexual habits. In one extremely unpleasant and dangerous incident, a white sociologist wants to compare sexual organs—a suggestion that drives Horton into a rage in which he almost kills the man. Realizing what is happening to him, Horton, who is Catholic, goes to Confession; and in the long and interesting talk that Horton has afterward with the priest, the priest advises him to go home and regain his own identity. And the priest wonders how much good he, himself, is doing in the whole Negro-white quandary.

Other than its sensationalism, the main trouble with "Black Like Me" is that James Whitmore, a very capable actor, never looks convincingly Negro and too often carries on in an emotional rage that places him beyond the experiment Horton is conducting. It is no wonder that he reaches no conclusion other than despair at the whole problem. But the very fact that the film was made is a step up from that despair.

EVEN MORE desperate in its portrait of Negroes' deprivations is the bitterly realistic film directed by Shirley Clarke: "The Cool World." The script, which Miss Clarke wrote from Warren Miller's novel and the play made from it, is ostensibly telling the story of fifteen-year-old Duke Custis who lives in New York's Harlem in a tiny apartment with his grandmother, his mother and the mother's current "husband." Above everything else Duke wants a gun and hopes to be head of the gang of Pythons. To get the gun, he sells marijuana and steals. To become head of the gang, he throws out the president, who is on heroin, and wins for himself the fourteen-year-old prostitute who is the Pythons' exclusive property. And before this grim film comes to its grim ending, Duke leads his Pythons in a rumble with another gang and succeeds in killing a boy.

Most of the young people in "The Cool World" were recruited from a local junior high school and, while they are not actors, Shirley Clarke has made them convincing in their roles, especially Hampton Clanton whose portrait of Duke is so realistic it hurts. What Miss Clarke has not done, however, is allow us to project ourselves into the story. In fact, she often wanders far from the plot to give us vivid, documentary scenes that show Harlem at its worst. "The Cool World" is one-sided and its exposure of Harlem's filth merits our consideration and increases our shame, but dramatically the picture would have done better to explore Duke in greater depth and Harlem less. Harlem is real and it is there (although at times, the naturalistic dialogue is somewhat difficult to understand), but there must be more to Duke's story than this. Only occasionally do we become involved in Duke's emotional problems. No doubt Miss Clarke, for all her brilliant film-making, means to say this is a world Duke never made—and

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what chance has he in it? She gives no answers, but she succeeds in making us cringe. Harlem and "The Cool World" is our world too. PHILIP T. HARTUNG

CORRESPONDENCE

"Food and People"

New York, N.Y.

TO THE EDITORS: It would be difficult for any informed observer to deny the thesis of Father Arthur McCormack's article, "Food and People" [April 10]: that a crash program of agricultural development is needed in the underdeveloped world and that the "have" nations must provide the technological seeds for this program. Whether two-thirds or one-third of the world's people go to bed hungry every night should be of lesser consideration to Christians in developed nations than the fact that millions of persons, including many children and many fellow Christians, live below the level of American and European livestock—not to mention the extraordinary rise in the standard of living necessary for their realization of the intellectual-spiritual life.

The truth of Father McCormack's statement of the relationship between nourishment and general socio-economic development was impressed on me during a just-concluded tour of a half-dozen backward areas of South America. For example, for many years the average grade-school enrollment in a certain school district in the State of Puno, Peru, was less than 50 per cent. Each year almost half of those children who started the school year had dropped out by its conclusion. In the first year of the Food-for-Peace Program in that district—breakfast and a hot lunch provided daily—attendance rose to nearly 100 percent of the eligible children and the drop-out rate diminished to almost zero. Individual academic achievement quadrupled.

Taking Father McCormack's article as a whole, however, there is a danger that it could be mistaken for the kind of special pleading he himself professes to abhor. I refer primarily to the fact that his stress on agricultural revolution to the denigration of the need for population control appears to be in line with the polemics of certain Catholic demographers, one of whose final arguments hinges on the probability that vast numbers of humans will be contentedly living on artificial satellites orbiting the earth in time to handle the predicted saturation of its habitable areas. The interpretation of Father McCormack's article as basically a defense of the "Catholic position" on birth control is facilitated by the general lack of Catholic-authored articles in which population control is recognized as a key factor in solving the socio-economic dilemmas of the underdeveloped world.

Father McCormack states that "in spite of popular belief outside the Catholic Church and in some circles inside it, . . . the Church believes in responsible parenthood. . . ." In its heart-of-hearts the Church may indeed believe so. But it has not come very far in projecting this belief, especially in those parts of the world where such projection could be invaluable in combatting irresponsible parenthood and where the Church has decades of complacency towards overpopulation to live down.

An example of this also comes from South America. Of the many progressive national, regional and diocesan pastoral plans conceived and composed by the South American Church in the past few years, not one even mentions the problem of the population explosion, much less the subject of education for responsible parenthood. This despite the fact that such controversial areas as land reform are often treated in a very progressive manner. Of the numerous South American priests and bishops whom I interviewed, only one would address himself directly to the subject of the Church and responsible parenthood. Some evaded the question, and one key "progressive" bishop denied that the population explosion was a serious problem in Latin America. Jesuit Father Roger Vekemans of Santiago, Chile's *Centro Bellarmino,* who did answer directly, stated that the population explosion was indeed one of the most serious problems facing Latin America and added that the Latin American Church must co-operate, albeit regretfully, with public programs of population control, especially educational programs (always, of course, within the strictures of its moral teaching on right and wrong means). As for lay participation in the thinking of the Church on the subject of population control, the most avant-garde situation I found was in Chile, where I was reliably informed by two lay leaders that the subject is "discussed freely" with the fathers at the *Centro Bellarmino* and with certain other clergy.

My conclusion is this. The struggle by a few leaders, Catholic and non-Catholic, to alert the developed world to the need for means other than population control to help the underdeveloped world reach the economic "take-off" point may paradoxically be made more difficult by articles in which Catholic experts (especially clergy) press that same argument while taking swipes at those who stress population control. Is it not possible that for those who, believing birth control the only answer, refused to help the Freedom-From-Hunger workers, the Church's counterpart is the expert who refuses to join in the efforts for population control because of the belief that *any* other proposed solution for world poverty is superior? Certainly in the United States, Catholic pressure has been a major factor in inhibiting the Government from overseas aid programs which would fall under the heading of population control. It may be reasonable to suggest, then, that the Catholic Church's opposition to "birth-control" programs and its apathy towards programs of population-control have been influential in delaying the day when population control will play its part

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in remedying the social and economic ills of the underdeveloped world. ROBERT J. ALLEN

"Changing Roles"

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. Cogley's excellent observations on changing roles within the Church [March 27], unhappily fail to bring out the rather close connection between roles and structures. The one is a reflection of the other, and though roles may change, the structure specified by an old role may continue to exist, and in many instances, utterly impede the performance of the new role.

The problem within the Church is not that our new roles are unknown, or unrecognized, but that the structure of the Church forbids the formal acting out of these roles. For example, our present "agonizing reappraisal" has focussed attention on the plight of the laity, the adolescent status of sisters and the difficulty of implementing liturgical, catechetical and other reforms. Little however, is said about the structure of the Church which is geared to a different age and to different roles.

A close examination of the Church according to its present structural form in the United States, reveals the following: 1) It has disenfranchised the junior clergy and laity; 2) disregarded canon law in regard to synods, deaneries, visitation by bishops, availability of channels of communication from the ground level up; 3) It has disregarded the basic common law, political consensus of Anglo-Saxon countries (and even of canon law itself), in its removal of all checks and balances in the government of the Church, resulting in uncontrolled despotism and arbitrary rule by those possessed of authority within the Church; 4) has disregarded the notion of law as an *ordinatio rationis*, and has instead substituted a foreign idea, that law is an *ordinatio voluntatis*, with consequent arrogance and disregard for the rights, not merely wishes, of those governed.

As a consequence of all this, the Church in the United States: 1) has become in its present organized form, incapable of providing any true leadership in the matter of civil rights, because it itself is ignorant of the meaning of such demands, explicitly denying the need of them to its own members. The determining factor in Church policy is no longer the moral dimensions of our situation, but rather the economic, namely, how to finance the Catholic school system; 2) more seriously: the work of the Church in parishes is seriously hindered because of the lack of a proper structure which would permit efficiency in the conduct of parish affairs; 3) it condemns about 50 percent or more of the clergy to terms of twenty to thirty years of something only slightly less than servitude, as assistants, without rights, and above all, without the freedom to truly act as priests, which in the long run results in the failure of the Church to adequately respond to the demands of our times; 4) the present structure of the Church interdicts the possibility of genuine liturgical, catechetical, theological and pastoral reform.

Mr. Cogley complains that sisters are "underpaid, overworked . . . thanks to clerics who overburden them, parents who underestimate their needs, canon laws that hem them in on all sides." Other than the reference to canon law, this is more accurately a description of the position of assistants. Would that we had some canon laws to protect us! The codex devotes 44 canons to the laity; 32 to canons attached to cathedrals, dealing with all the possible times they can miss the office in common and still receive their benefice; assistants, by contrast receive one (1) canon (#476), out of the entire 2414. Religious receive 194! Our Los Angeles diocesan statutes, after lengthy statements of the obligations of assistants, declare their rights to be one day off a week and three weeks vacation, to be arranged at the convenience of the pastor.

Lest this appear yet another whine masquerading under the guise of honest self-criticism, the following are some serious proposals for reform of the Church's structure: 1) Return to the Church's traditional view of law as an *ordinatio rationis;* 2) Return to the sound practices of canon law: the synods and the deaneries, updated to include some of the more essential democratic structures of our society.

As a consequence of this basic reform, we would be provided with the necessary machinery for initiating further reform, *e.g.* the election of bishops, reduction in size of parishes, escape from economic determinism (*i.e.* control by economics, through the school specifying the nature of the parish and the role of the pastor), and permitting the Church to be the Church. An increase of vocations would probably result: the present image of the assistant as errand boy of the pastor is not particularly attractive. The liturgical and catechetical reforms would have some chance, and priests would actually get to meet their parishioners once in a while.

Above all, this return to canon law would institutionalize change instead of leaving it to the whim of pastor or bishop, be he liberal or conservative. At present the normal channels of communication are clogged; there is no grievance machinery, no arena of public opinion.

It is pointless to criticize individuals, diocesan papers, foot-dragging in liturgical commissions, impotence of seminaries etc., until something is done about the structure of the Church. Even if the seminaries could be geared to turning out saints, administrative geniuses etc., they would still end up as despots because of the structure of the Church. Give us justice, not charity.

NAME WITHHELD

Next Week
SPRING JUVENILE ISSUE
of The Commonweal

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New Insurgency

The New Orpheus. Edited by Nathan A. Scott, Jr. Sheed & Ward. $7.50.

by George Greene

JEAN COCTEAU once defined the subject matter of modern arts as *"le mystère laïc."* But even in the case of less self-conscious men, for some time it has been impossible for any creator to function exclusively in the naturalistic order. A similar unrest has grown among scholars. One group seeks a broadening which would allow contact with a work at a level more inclusive than "technique" (in Mark Schorer's phrase), at the level, that is to say, of what D. S. Savage has called "vision."

Dr. Scott of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago has chosen a group of essays exhibiting this trend—it is hardly a "school"— which draws upon Christian theological perspectives. The editor is modest about the dimensions of the "new insurgency." Originally, indeed, he selected these statements for the convenience of graduate students. Whatever his motives, he avoids what he fears—he is no "huckster of *Tendenz.*"

Ever since Plato banished mimetic art in Book Ten of the *Republic,* some scholars—always in the minority—have sought a basis for artistic expression in a mode more ample than Platonic imitation or Aristotelian purgation. "If you receive the pleasure-seasoned Muse," Plato warned, "pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law and agreed principles." Dissenting tardily but firmly, the first pages of *The New Orpheus* state the case for a Christian aesthetic. A second phase examines the impact of two doctrines most central to such an endeavor, the Creation and the Incarnation. Later essays apply insights which grow out of the Christian aesthetic to various genres, while a coda attempts to show how Christians, creative artists and readers alike, may profit from those who inhabit the terrain outside. "If we commit ourselves to saying

"...where thought is free in its range, we need never fear to hazard what is good in itself." THOMAS JEFFERSON

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that the Christian revelation discovers to us the nature of all truth," Dorothy Sayers aptly summarizes, "then it must discover to us the nature of the truth about Art among other things."

The most reassuring trait among these scholars is their frank confrontation of the way in which the artist fulfills his vocation. They counter the charge that criticism based on a religious commitment must of necessity encourage the dictatorship of theologians at the expense of literary values. More often, as Denis de Rougemont cautions, the breakdown comes from another quarter: " . . . those who devote themselves to the criticism of art—and every artist more or less is of this number—might at least make an effort to go beyond the stage of a total lack of theological culture where we see them today."

Mr. de Rougemont makes short work of one verb inherited from the Romantics, who encouraged a latitude which ultimately sanctioned "to create" as legitimate usage for TV programs as well as the more luxuriant growths of Madison Avenue. For too long we have lived in a tradition which thinks of an art work as a luxury rather than an object whose purpose it is *"to signify,* organically, and by means of its own structure." The greatest names of our century—Picasso, Joyce, Braque, Kafka, Stravinsky— have not reflected a world of beauty. Mr. de Rougemont evokes a more arduous goal, "the bribing of the attention, the magnetizing of the sensibility, the fascinating of the meditation. . . . "

Of all the genres discussed, clearly the modern novel seems most liable to error. (One asks how much of this distrust may be traced back to T. S. Eliot's pronouncement about the secularization of the novel?) Mr. Savage, for example, takes a dim view indeed. He considers that its chief lesson grows out of "the disintegration of the consciousness of modern man. . . . " To substantiate this he cites the plight of E. M. Forster, among others, as one traceable to "slavery to the bourgeois spirit and to society. . . . " In this case one enters a vote of dissent. Surely Mr. Forster has fought against the tendency to accept blindly the rules of massive groups—including the bourgeoisie. Is not this the whole point of the tension that arises between Margaret Schlegel and Mr. Wilcox in *Howards End?*

Whatever additions or deletions one wishes in single essays, one applauds both the plausibility and vigor of the total program. In "The Writer as Christian," Malcolm Ross underlines the fact that there has never been anything such as "pure" Christian art. One need not cite the example of men so diverse as Dante, Chaucer, Milton, and Dostoevsky. In our own era no one has utilized the findings of the new anthropology better than Mr. Eliot, and the same may be said for W. H. Auden's borrowings from Freudian psychology. "Because he created the Gothic style," Mr. Ross insists on the creator's right to mirror his own era, "he is not therefore a Gothic artist."

With the growth of Protestantism, for centuries the major preoccupation was "the Paradise within." We all cherish that long and distinguished list of documents, a stream which carries us all the way from Bunyan to James Joyce. Ideally, though, the Christian artist encompasses a wider range—the sacramental vision of reality made possible by the Incarnation. Mr. Ross cites Eliot's *Four Quartets* as one example, "touching both exterior nature and interior man with inscrutable but perpetual benediction." The task is not easy. Candidates must shun what even Mr. Eliot has not always been successful in dodging—the tug of the past, coveting "the accidental social hierarchies of the lost ages of faith."

In a decade of ecumenical hope, nothing could be more fitting than the final essays, where contributors analyze the possibility of exchange between the Christian community and those who belong to a "one-story world." Amos Wilder stresses what may be learned. "In our desacralized world," he reminds us, "what was once the religious dimension is opened for many by artistic experience alone." What has always loomed as the highest barrier between the man of faith and the man of art has been the fear that the former is trying to influence, even to convert. We have a good deal to learn from the earth worship of Lawrence, the verbal magic of Yeats, the discipline of Joyce. New vistas have been opened up by those "scapegoats and prodigals and victims of the modern experience." For it is often they who have maximum knowledge about the "outer and inner emigration of our world."

If Christians are to participate in the creative life, within the framework of their vocation they must prize above all else what Ezra Pound called the "dance of the intellect among words." The imagination remains, after all, a natural human faculty.

Everything depends on the vantage point from which one interprets its data. It is a question of height more than intent which distinguishes the protest against fragmentation of the Christian artist from that of his Ishmaelite brother. One achieves nothing with a show of violence in Promethean, Luciferian—or pastoral —vein. "Form," Mr. Savage well says,

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"is that which orders content into significance."

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Nicholas of Cusa

Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought. By Paul E. Sigmund. Harvard University Press. $6.95.

by John Ratté

GREAT IS the debate in our century about the uses and abuses of history. The study of 19th and 20th century historiography—which is to say the history of the writing-up of the past, both in fact and theory, both in political and social event, and in the ways men have thought about those events—reveals a complex pattern of interpretation and re-interpretation, a pattern in which it is often not difficult to descry as much of the needs of the author as of the substance of the antique figures presented for contemporary perusal.

Certain themes and problems have become recurrent in this process of restudy and representation. Of these, the transition from the unity of medieval Europe as *respublica christiana* to the diversity of the modern world is perhaps the most inescapable, possibly because it is the most important. In addition to being an informative, if too thickly textured presentation of both the substance and the sources of the political thought of Nicholas of Cusa, conciliarist, benefice-collector, canon lawyer and cardinal, Paul Sigmund's study is also a striking example of the pendulum swing in historical study which often affects thought in the worlds larger than those of the medievalist and political scientist.

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dieval intellect in the decisive period of the conciliar movement of the first half of the 15th century. Professor Sigmund has not written a general presentation of the man Cusanus, the entirety of his thought, the richness of his world. Rather he has attempted to make another contribution to the reassessment of the thought and action of the conciliar period which places emphasis not on what is being foreshadowed—in the way of constitutional theory, individualism in legal notions of consent, relativism in cosmological constructs—but on what is old; which is to say, what is corporate, hierarchical, continuous, and authority-oriented. All this through an examination of the elements of neo-Platonism, canon-law tradition, and contemporary political (imperial and papal and conciliar) theory and action as they are focused in the life and works of Nicholas of Cusa, in the 30's and 40's and 50s' of the fifteenth century.

This is a lot to juggle within the 300-odd pages of a study which takes as its point of departure one man—even if this one man happens to be, in the opinion of some modern scholars, "the first modern philosopher." It is precisely here that the virtues and defects of this book and reinterpretation are conjoined. For Professor Sigmund is at pains in his study of Cusanus' *De Concordantia Christiana,* its origins, and its extension in the subsequent thought of the author's subsequent writings, to show a kind of *De Concordantia Cusani,* if that is properly put. For it must be confessed that the very effort on Professor Sigmund's part to reconcile all aspects of Nicholas' career—especially, his conversion from conciliarism to papalism—defeats his purpose. The effort tends to focus so much on the concordance, or unity in diversity, of Cusanus political theory in the several stages of his development, that the real concordance which Cusanus strove for in his writings, and in part achieved in his major work, is obscured.

I suspect that there are two reasons for this weakness: one is the fact that so much of the book is spent in a recapitulation of Cusanus's antecedents. This is not a bad thing: evil the man, or wise, who cannot benefit from a refresher course in the hierarchical thought of Dionysus the Areopagite, of a re-assessment of the Victorines. But when it is done with an intense direction towards the thought of a man whose writings are yet to be preserved then some confusion results. Second, and connected with this first criticism, is the fact that when we get to the core of Nicholas's thought—we are made aware of the fact that we really are dealing with a single-minded argument.

Since the thesis of the book—that Nicholas of Cusa is neither turncoat, constitutionalist, consent-oriented revolutionary, or papal supremacist—is both important, and convincing, there can be no contest with the effort to present it. But there can be some criticism of the mode of its presentation, which strives so mightily to show consistency in the development of Cusanus' thought that this work begins to look like a summa of all the various strands of medieval political theory.

These critical comments must be tempered. Professor Sigmund has done Cusanus a service by rescuing him from the clutches of nineteenth century political theorists, Protestant, Catholic, rationalist, by letting him be seen freely and openly in the arena of contemporary debate, and before the rich and multi-dimensional backdrop of medieval and classical political theory. He has also done contemporary political and social theory a good by attempting a re-assessment of Cusanus' search for unity in diversity, for a catholic concordance in both the ecclesiastical and politial realms, in an age which needs to see the middle ages as something more than a dark age or a haven for the corporate never-never land of the aristocratic mass society theorists.

Perfect in Mood

Kanthapura. By Raja Rao. New Directions. $4.75.

by Martin Tucker

WHEN Raja Rao's first novel written in English, *The Serpent and the Rope,* appeared a year ago, many readers were impressed with the evocation of a mystic's mind and the atmosphere of intellectual and philosophical journeying into the center of meaning. The novel, set in Oxford, Provence and South India, explored in brilliant, often abstract episodes the relationship of a husband and wife from different cultures who ultimately failed to blend their varying accomplishments.

Kanthapura, an earlier novel but now first translated into English, is a much more simply narrated story. It has only one setting, the symbolic town of Kanthapura, and it speaks in folk rhythms of the transformation

worship

A review devoted to the Liturgical Apostolate

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which Gandhi's philosophy achieved in a tradition-ridden society.

Whereas *The Serpent and the Rope* was philosophical and abstract, *Kanthapura* is poetic and concrete. In many ways it seems the work of a young man, or at least of a man who has remained young. It has few pretension to intellectual complexity, and all its meaning is conveyed in spare, ballad-like rhythms. The novel is really a lyric on the expansion of man's spirit, and it carries with it the purity and intensity of youthful ardor. Its music is haunting: Rao has achieved one of those rare simple tales that is perfect in mood and declaration.

Kanthapura is really any town in India before the advent of Gandhi released a flood of longings. To this town returns Moorthy, the educated Brahmin, "honest as an elephant," who "had been to the city and knew things" which people in the sleepy town had forgotten or buried. Moorthy visits the Pariahs, or untouchables, and attempts to teach them to read and write. He invites the Pariahs to the religious festivals which he and his aunt organize. His acts are at first pacific, not meant to disturb, but they are soon opposed by those in the town who have a vested interest in a caste society. Eventually the opposition achieves its purpose—to make Moorthy an outcast.

The struggle, however, has only begun. Moorthy, after a fever and exaltation, realizes his destiny. He throws away his European clothes, eats at the doorways of houses like a Pariah, and continues to incite his townspeople to nonviolent action. The awareness of their growing strength leads the Pariahs, and many Brahmins, to protest against the government—by wearing only the cloth they themselves spin, by refusing to pay land revenues and by boycotting the toddy booths, a particular symbol of India's subjection.

The struggle initiated by a belief in nonviolence leads to bloodshed. At the end of the novel Moorthy has been beaten and jailed many times. Yet though the struggle seems to have ended in defeat, a triumph has been assured.

The narrator of the novel is the old aunt of Moorthy, a woman who has never been interested in politics, but who, through love of her nephew, is caught in the spirit of the new movement. Rao's use of this point-of-view technique is a brilliant stroke, for it allows for a simple rendering of the tale, one in which the human element is at all times in view. It also seems faintly reminiscent of E. M. Forster, who knows Rao and admires his work. Rao's old aunt is much like Forster's old woman—the steady matriarchs who hold society together while it is going through its convulsions. She is present in the final scene, a symbol of the stability of the human tradition.

REVIEWERS

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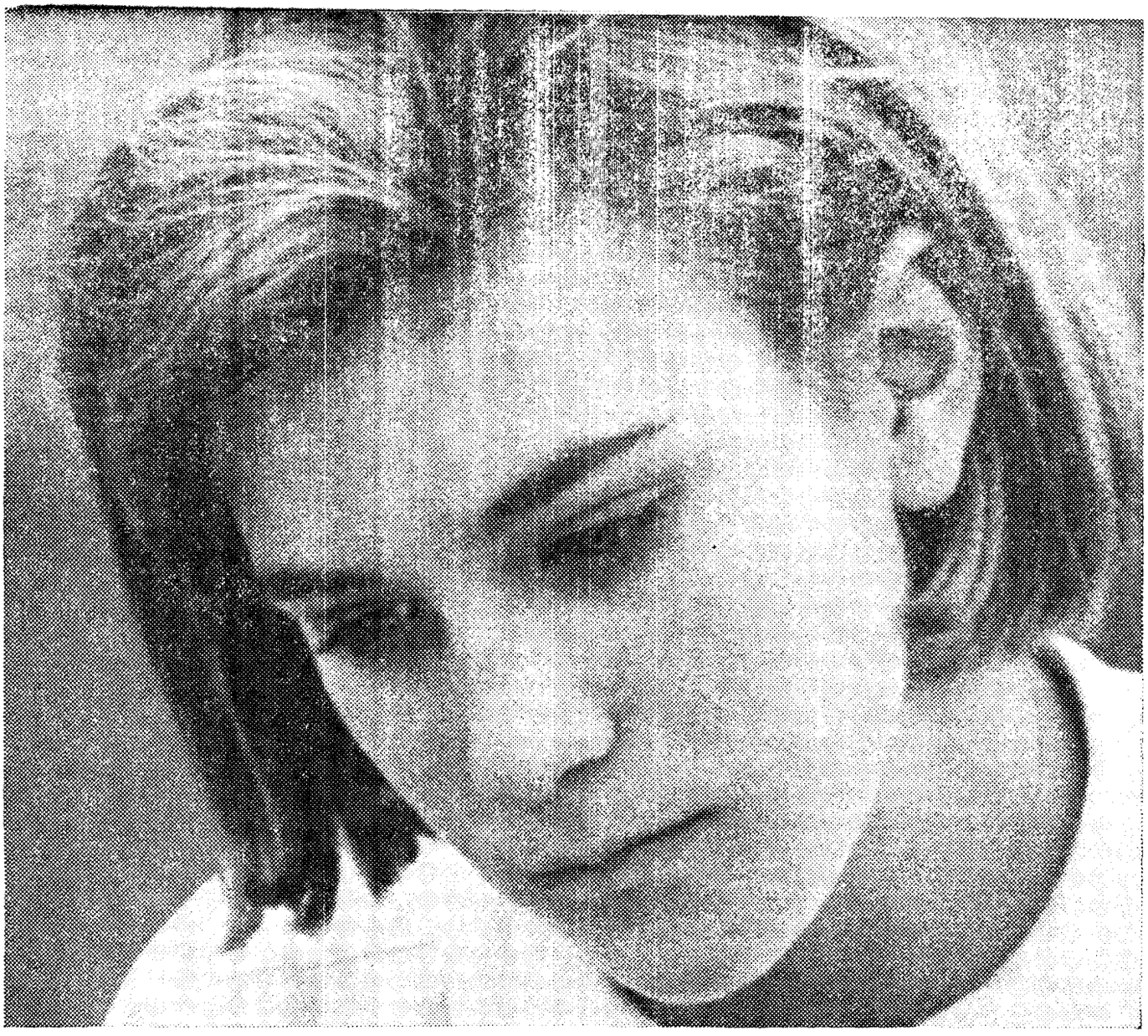

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